

Message Text

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ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 STR-07 TRSE-00 L-03
SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 OMB-01 FTC-01 /043 W
-----026708 061204Z /11

R 060156Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9322

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: BEXP, ETRD, JA

SUBJECT: TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEE: AMBASSADOR
MANSFIELD'S VISIT TO MHW

REF: STATE 147338

SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
WELFARE APPEARS TO HAVE SERVED OUR INTEREST IN
HEIGHTENING AWARENESS OF TRADE IMPLICATIONS OF MHW
ACTIONS AND OF GETTING SOME MOVEMENT ON ABBOTT
AND CORDIS DOW CASES. END SUMMARY.

1. AMB. MANSFIELD CALLED ON THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
WELFARE (MHW) OZAWA JULY 3 AS PART OF EMBASSY'S
CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF VARIOUS JAPANESE
MINISTRIES OF THEIR ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE MATTERS.
AMBASSADOR OPENED WITH GENERAL EXPRESSION OF CONCERN
ABOUT TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN U.S. AND JAPAN, NOTING
HOW DOMESTICALLY ORIENTED DECISIONS OF SOME MINISTRIES
MAY NEVERTHELESS HAVE FOREIGN TRADE POLICY REPERCUSSIONS.
HE EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT TBZ CASE
WAS BEING FORWARDED AND NOTED EXCELLENT COOPERATION
USG AND GOJ IN HEALTH AND WELFARE RESEARCH.
OUR TACIT UNDERSTANDING FOR THIS MEETING WAS THAT
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IT WOULD BE "COURTESY CALL" AND THAT WE WOULD NOT
DISCUSS ANY INDIVIDUAL CASES WHICH ARE NOW UNDER
CONSIDERATION WITH MHW, BUT TO OUR SURPRISE, MINISTER
OZAWA HIMSELF WAS QUITE PREPARED TO DISCUSS THESE
CASES AND RAISED THE PROBLEMS OF TBZ, ABBOTT AND
CORDIS DOW DURING OUR DISCUSSIONS. HIGHLIGHTS OF
OUR CONVERSATION WERE AS FOLLOWS:

A. MINISTER OZAWA WAS PERSONALLY INTERESTED IN ANY TRADE IMPEDIMENTS CAUSED BY MHW, WHETHER INTENTIONAL OR UNINTENTIONAL. HE STATED THAT IN THE FUTURE IF WE MEET WITH ANY PROBLEM IN PURSUING CASES WITH MHW, HE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW OF THEM.

B. WITH REGARDS TO TBZ CASE, MINISTER OZAWA SAID THAT THIS CASE SHOULD BE DECIDED BY THE END OF THIS MONTH. HE WAS INFORMED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS CASE BY PM FUKUDA, AND AS A RESULT, HE HAS CHANGED MEMBERSHIP OF THE CENTRAL MEDICAL COUNCIL IN ORDER TO SPEED-UP APPROVAL PROCESS.

C. ON THE ABBOTT CASE, THE MINISTER STATED HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY HIS FRIEND USHIBA OF U.S. INTEREST IN CASE AND THAT HE INTENDS TO CONVENE A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL PHARMACEUTICAL AFFAIR COUNCIL SOON TO WORK OUT A WAY TO CUT THE TIME REQUIRED TO APPROVE ABBOTT'S NEW DRUG APPLICATION. WHILE HE WAS SOMEWHAT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THIS CASE, HE DID CAUTION THAT TIME WOULD BE REQUIRED TO WORK OUT THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE CASE.

D. WITH RESPECT TO THE CORDIS DOW CASE, MHW IS NOW LOOKING AT THE POSSIBILITY OF REVAMPING THE MEDICAL INSURANCE REIMBURSEMENT SCHEME FOR DIALYSIS TREATMENT BY SEPARATING TECHNICAL SERVICE FEES FROM COST OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIALYZERS. MINISTER OZAWA NOTED THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 15 BRANDS OF DIALYZERS USED IN THE JAPANESE MARKET AND MHW INTENDS TO SET A PRICE ON EACH OF THESE BRANDS UP TO THE LIMIT THAT MHW WILL REIMBURSE UNDER ITS NATIONAL INSURANCE PLAN. IN THIS WAY, THE MORE COSTLY AND MORE EFFICIENT DIALYZERS WOULD BE REIMBURSED MORE THAN THE LESSER COMPETITIVE MODELS. AGAIN, MINISTER OZAWA SAID THAT THIS CHANGE WOULD TAKE TIME AS IT WOULD REQUIRE DISCUSSIONS WITH PHYSICIANS' ASSOCIATION AND APPROVAL BY THE SOCIAL INSURANCE MEDICAL COUNCIL.

2. PRESS SUBSEQUENTLY REPORTED AMBASSADOR'S CALL, NOTING THAT TBZ, HEPATITIS TESTING AND DIALYZERS HAD BEEN DISCUSSED.

3. ECMIN WILL SEE DIR GEN PHARMACEUTICALS BUREAU JULY 6 FOR FURTHER FOLLOW-UP.

MANSFIELD

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRADE, COMMITTEES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TOKYO12171
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780277-0334
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780788/aaaacwls.tel
Line Count: 113
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7c74e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION COME
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 147338
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2094894
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEE: AMBASSADOR MANSFIELD'S VISIT TO MHW
TAGS: BEXP, ETRD, JA, US, (MANSFIELD, MICHAEL J), (OZAWA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7c74e779-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014